

## PURPOSELESS HERITAGES

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numbers of animals flaunt glaring hues in the face of danger. If the thrush is protected by its speckled plumage, how has the blackbird survived alongside it ? The brilliant colours, the singing capacities of some cock birds are ascribed to sexual selection—to the advantages which these give the cocks in finding mates. They doubtless afford pleasure to the females : but this does not prove that they owe their existence to their attractiveness. Is the taste of man responsible for the vagaries of female fashion ? Moreover, it is difficult to suppose that females are attracted by the small eccentricities in which, on the Darwinian hypothesis, these excellencies originated. The colours of certain flowers may attract fertilizing insects : but there are brilliant flowers that must fertilize themselves. Of what use are the flashing colours that embellish the chrysalides of many butterflies, the long beaks and tails of many tropical birds, the horns of female reindeer and cattle, the hair which some races of men grow on their faces ? In truth Life is not logical or frugal in its activities, and we owe to its unstinted prodigality of change much of that which is beautiful in the world.

We must then admit that the varieties of form and colour which distinguish the species of plants and animals have proceeded in great measure from a capricious handiwork which is inherent

in Life. But are we to believe that changes in no case purposeful—that the influence of environment, habit or culture may not stimulate variation which is so far purposeful that it is directed to an end ? Beyond a doubt organisms are influenced in colour by their surroundings. and also in form. if only by such artificial mutilations as shorten the tails of nunnies. But these changes would be of no progressive value unless